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Debut Middle-Grade Novel Invites Readers into *The Aftertime*

written by L.L.H. Harms

on sale August 13, 2024

“It’s getting increasingly difficult to find good new literature for boys that focuses on character, decision making, and growing up while still being interesting and action-oriented. . . . I had expectations for this story, but they were well exceeded. [This book] will definitely be a new addition to our . . . library.”

- Yvie Field, educator, Homeschool on the Range

[Brandylane Publishers, Inc.](#) of Richmond, Virginia, is excited to announce the release of a new work of middle-grade fiction, [The Aftertime](#) by L.L.H. Harms.

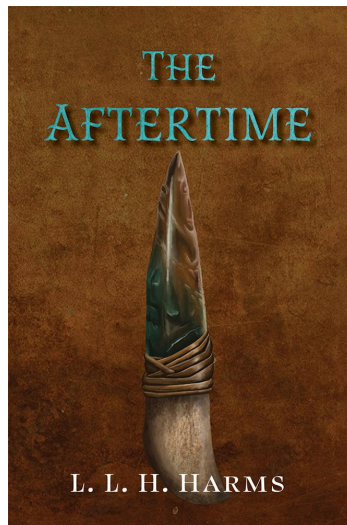
Twelve-year-old Zack Mason has a lot of problems—even though his family is well established in their hometown of Mason’s Crossroads, Virginia, having descended from the first generation of white people who ever settled in the area. Zack’s relationship with his big brother Wymond has soured in recent years, his overprotective mother attempts to curtail his neighborhood adventures, and a trio of local bullies seem to have it out for him. Only the ingenuity and support of his best friend Jack McClarnon, another boy whose large family has a long history in Mason’s Crossroads, provides a bright spot in Zack’s life.

Unbeknownst to the two boys, their ancestors have a history of friendship as well. Nathan Mason, who first moved to the then-wilderness with his family in 1766; and Corwin Brown Fox, one of the last remaining members of the Monacan tribe who used to live in the area before the white settlers drove them off their ancestral homelands in Virginia’s Piedmont region, become friends at twelve years old, despite the mutual hatred many of the other members of their separate races have for each other. In the face of their own families’ misgivings, the two play, hunt, track, and fish with each other as Nathan’s father Mark establishes a homestead and then a tobacco business in the area, with Corwin teaching Nathan how to live in the wilderness. And when Corwin gives Nathan a gift—a knife crafted from a precious heirloom from his own family and infused with the magic of the natural world they value—the two soon find it can channel the power of their friendship in ways that will change the course of their own lives, and the lives of their descendants—provided it is never used in anger.

As Zack and Jack deal with childhood friendships and rivalries, so too do Nathan and Corwin fight prejudice into their early twenties, when the two establish families of their own, enlist in the Virginia militia together, and participate in the Battle of Great Bridge near Norfolk, VA in 1775. Even after their deaths, the knife remains an important heirloom, passed down by members of the Mason family. And when it comes into Zack’s hands through his grandfather Nick, he too will have to use it not to harm, but to mend his relationship with his brother, following him into a

special place where Monacan belief meets the natural human inclination for connection—into the Aftertime.

An emotional work of historical fiction that acknowledges the deep wounds left by colonialism and white supremacy, and which honors the memory, traditions, and cultures of natives who lived in North America before the US was founded, *The Aftertime* releases today, August 13, 2024.



What if you had a weapon—a knife that had the power to heal—as long as it was never used in anger? What if this knife had been handed down for generations in your family, but because of you, it has now been taken? What if you were only twelve years old?

Our story begins in Virginia in the mid-1700s—when English settlers in Virginia claimed Monacan land as their right—and brings us into the twenty-first century. This is a story that spans generations yet begins with the simple friendship between two boys: one Monacan and the other English. The Aftertime asks what is worth fighting for, and how to fight for it. Most importantly, it's a story about following your moral compass and standing up, sometimes all alone, for what is just.

About the Author

For years, [L.L.H. Harms](#) has written books, stories, and poems and simply placed them on a shelf. With encouragement from one of her children, she has finally decided to share her writing with all of us. *The Aftertime* is her debut novel; a picture book is forthcoming. She lives in Virginia with her family.

Interviews available upon request.

[Brandylane Publishers, Inc.](#) is an independent press located in Richmond, Virginia, that has published books since 1985.

The Aftertime (hardcover, 183 pages, \$25.95 / paperback, 183 pages, \$15.95 / Kindle e-book \$7.99) is available from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and other fine booksellers.